

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY EDUCATION

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE COMMISSION

Third Quarter Meeting
Monday, February 7, 2022
Teleconference

Commission Members Present

Zac Everhart, Chairperson
Rhonda Rivers, Vice Chairperson

Dr. Sheresa Blanchard
Dr. J. Lanier DeGrella
Dr. Sharon Foster
Alice Fink
Amelie Schoel
Dr. Iheoma Iruka Thompson

Brooke Child
Beth Messersmith
Dr. Elizabeth Gilleland
Perry Melton
Janie Truesdale

Commission Members with an Excused Absence

Susan Butler-Staub
Mitchell Gold
Brittany Riggs
Kimberly J. McClure

Division of Child Development & Early Education Staff Present

Ariel Ford, Director
Dr. Kristi Snuggs, Deputy Director
Arlette Lambert, Director's Office
Dedra Alston, Director's Office
Branda Watford, Administration/Policy
Laura Hewitt, Director's Office
Lorena Gonzalez, Early Education
Tammy Barnes, Regulatory Services
Alison Keisler, Regulatory Services
Andrea Lewis, Regulatory Services
Lorie Pugh, Regulatory Services
Regina Brooks, IMS Manager
Tammy Freeman, IMS Team

Attorney General's Office Staff

Amber Davis, DCDEE Attorney
John Green, Commission Attorney

Welcome

Chairperson Zac Everhart called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and reviewed housekeeping items. Chairperson Everhart thanked everyone for being available to participate in the Third Quarter Meeting.

Roll Call

Chairperson Everhart read the ethic and conflicts of interest statement and asked whether there were any member conflicts noted for today. Being there were none, he asked Ms. Dedra Alston to perform the roll call. Attorney John Green announced there was a quorum.

Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Everhart asked for a motion to approve the December 6, 2021, Second Quarter Meeting Minutes.

Commission Action: Dr. Iheoma Iruka Thompson motioned for approval of the minutes and Dr. Lanier DeGrella seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Director's Report – Ariel Ford

Staff Spotlight

Director Ariel Ford spotlighted and thanked Regina Brooks (IMS Manager) and staff for all the last-minute changes that occurs before and during all Commission Meetings. She and her staff work seamlessly to ensure technology operates flawlessly. She also thanked Arlette Lambert for gathering all the information needed to support these meetings.

Stabilization Grant

The Stabilization Grant will process \$805,000,000 via the American Rescue Plan Act that will assist in two grant areas: 1) fixed costs and family grants and 2) compensation support. This data is entered in the NC FAST online portal through initial application, monthly reporting, and quarterly uploads of receipts.

Providers can use the funds in the following ways:

- Rent, mortgage, utilities
- Payroll benefits
- Health & safety training
- Facility maintenance or improvements
- PPE, cleaning & sanitizing supplies
- Equipment related to COVID-19
- Goods to continue child care services
- Mental health support for staff & children

These funds are taxable for the provider and for staff.

As of February 4, 2022, 4061 application have been approved (2944 – child care centers and 1117 for family child care homes) and providers from 99 of North Carolina's 100 counties have applied and been approved. There has been a total of 3961 programs paid with staff-based payments of \$92,267,880.00 and fixed cost payments of \$243,591,404.00 for a total of \$335,859,284.00 paid to date.

DCDEE is working with subsidy to ensure child care employees who receive benefits do not lose their subsidy vouchers. DCDEE can make this decision, as it has the authority.

Director Ford stated that there are improvements being made by family child care homes because they are setting up better business practices. Vice-chairperson Rhonda Rivers thanked DCDEE and the roll out of the grants. She stated that the grants are doing what they are supposed to do by providing some security financially, mentally, and in every capacity for owners to keep programs open and for the teachers that are showing up every day in the classroom. She also stated that she is excited about the 24 hours, 7 days a week mental health hotline.

The legislative update is:

Session Law 2021-69 – Revise Health Standard for Lead

- Defines "lead poisoning hazard" as any concentration of lead in drinking water equal to or greater than 10 parts per billion."

- All remediation plans shall require that the lead poisoning hazards be reduced to the following levels fewer than 15 parts per billion for lead in drinking water.
- The Commission for Public Health shall adopt temporary and permanent rules.
- This law was effective December 1, 2021.

Dr. Foster stated there would be a news blast going out within the week about simplifying the changes on lead-based issues.

Session Law 2021-127 (SB 570) Hold Harmless Star Ratings/ERS Assess

- Section I: Holds all licensed child care programs harmless at their current star rating if the loss of quality is due to a change in staff education level, effective until 6 months after the state of emergency is lifted.
- Section II: When ERS assessments resume, DCDEE shall lower the seventy-five percent (75%) threshold to fifty percent (50%) of lead teachers through June 30, 2023, for programs to be able to earn education points.
- Section III: A report is due March 30, 2023 to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee for Health and Human Services, and shall include the following:
 - The number of new high school Early Childhood Career and Technical Pathways programs across the state between June 30, 2021, and January 31, 2023.
 - New community college and university courses that award college credit towards a degree in early childhood based on work experience between June 30, 2021, and January 31, 2023.
 - New community college and university courses that allow college credits for taking online health, safety, and nutrition training modules between June 30, 2021, and January 31, 2023.
 - The number of enrollees in the Early Childhood and Infant-Toddler Certificate Programs, number of graduates from the programs with certificates, and the increase in the number of enrollees and graduates from the programs between June 30, 2021, and January 31, 2023.
 - The number of early childhood educators using T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships to pay for college tuition and the increase in the number of early childhood educators using T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to pay for college tuition between June 30, 2021, and January 31, 2023.
 - Availability of WAGE\$ salary supplement program by county, the number of early childhood educators working toward degrees in early childhood education who received salary supplements from WAGE\$, and the increase in the number of early childhood educators receiving WAGE\$ salary supplements between June 30, 2021, and January 31, 2023.
 - The number and percentage increase of early childhood educators with associate degrees in early childhood education between June 30, 2021, and January 31, 2023.
 - The number and percentage increase of early childhood educators with associate degrees between June 30, 2016, and June 30, 2021.

DCDEE Response

DCDEE Short-Term Response Plan – ARPA Funds

Immediately address teacher recruitment and retention and reduce barriers to meeting requirements:

- Allow 6 months, up from 120 days, to replace a position with a qualified candidate for 12 months after the state of emergency ends.
- Implement a new ERS process with a self-assessment component for new and eligible child care programs.

- Provide child care stabilization grants that child care businesses can use to support short-term hiring and retention strategies over the next 18 months using existing ARPA funding dedicated for child care.

DCDEE Long-Term Plan

This plan gives five core components for apprenticeship that will encourage more people to get involved in hopes that the workforce will become more robust and align compensation appropriately by:

- Increase the early childhood teacher pipeline by 20% (8,000 new teachers meeting higher qualifications) over the next 3 years
- Implement Multiple Strategies to Address Workforce Crisis
 - Enhance Secondary Technical Pathways and Build ECE Apprenticeship Programs
 - Expand TEACH Scholarships
 - Develop New Community College Courses and Fast-Track Credential and Certificate Programs
 - Enhance and Expand Alternative Compensation Strategies
 - Create signing and 6-month retention bonuses for credentialed/degreed teachers using ARPA Funding dedicated for child care

ECE Apprenticeships: What's Happening in North Carolina?

- Various county and regional ECE apprenticeship programs
- Planning committee established to explore development of statewide apprenticeship program
 - NC Division of Child Development and Early Education
 - Apprenticeship NC (NC Community Colleges System Office)
 - Child Care Services Association
- Planning committee currently exploring development of apprenticeship focused T.E.A.C.H. scholarships aligned with Apprenticeship NC
- Exploring funding mechanism to support statewide coordination

Develop New Community College Courses, Credential and Certificate Programs

- Design new courses that will award college credit toward a degree based on prior learning or work experience (up to 9 SHC – 3 courses)
- Design new courses that will award non-transferable college credit
 - Health, Safety and Nutrition Modules
- Create a fast-track certificate program for the Early Childhood and Infant Toddler Certificates to reduce time to complete certificate from 4 semesters to 1–2 semesters
 - Align with T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships
 - Provide funding for substitutes
- Develop Statewide CDA program with TEACHSTONE
 - Align with T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships
 - Credit for up to 5 Community College Courses

Enhance and Expand Existing Alternative Compensation Strategies

- Expand WAGE\$ statewide (currently in 57 counties), which provides salary supplements to teachers working toward degrees in Early Childhood
- Expand AWARD\$ Infant Toddler Salary Supplements
- Increase subsidy market rates from the 2015 to 2018 rates

Create Bonuses or Other Compensation Strategies

- Create a plan for signing and retention bonuses
- Pay for substitute teachers for training and educational pursuits
- Develop new T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships to align with educational programs

The ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit has been updated. Information to improve the Toolkit for providers would be going out within the new week.

Public comment period opened at 10:45 a.m.

Commission member and provider, Ms. Alicia Fink provided points of view in regard to the ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit:

- Facing inconsistencies in the Toolkit / families have been upset with providers
- Providers are being abused by families due to inconsistencies
- Lack of consistent information from county to county
- Information in the News and Observer articles
- Need to have a public service announcement
- Teachers don't feel safe in classrooms
- Need a universal email/note to all counties-providers about clarity of rules

Commission member Ms. Beth Messersmith commended Director Ford and Deputy Director Snuggs for the hard work and leadership for the progress on getting the kids off the child care subsidy wait list which has shown a 2% decrease and updates on the short session of Legislature in terms of the Governor's priorities.

Chairman Everhart asked if anyone else wanted to make a comment. No one indicated that they did therefore, he closed the public comment section at 11:17 a.m.

Curriculum Review Update – Dr. Sheresa Blanchard

Dr. Blanchard thanked everyone on the curriculum committee for their effort and time spent on the reviews. The review will be completed by the next meeting in May due to revisiting some reviews for consistencies so a summary can be provided.

Rulemaking Update – Dedra Alston

Ms. Alston expressed that an impact analysis for rules 10A NCAC 09 .0713, .2513, and .2809 is being written. The analysis will need to be approved by the Department and OSBM before bringing it before the Commission.

Director Ford thanked everyone and the providers for their feedback and shared the appreciation sent by Melissa Burroughs with working on the Commission.

<p>Chairperson Everhart adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.</p>
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**The next meeting of the North Carolina Child Care Commission is August 1, 2022
from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (First Quarter Meeting)**